

SHABBAT UNPACKED

Session 2

THE SOURCE OF BLESSING

Before we approach the essential components of Shabbat observance, it is worthwhile to take some time to appreciate the benefits and blessings that come along with the Shabbat experience.

As we greet Shabbat each week we sing the following in the Lecha Dodi prayer:

Let us go to greet Shabbat as it is the **source of blessing** | מקור הברכה כי היא

מקור הברכה - the source of blessing, that's huge! We all crave a blessed life... Shabbat is the place to find it, Shabbat is the source of so much blessing. How so?

כי ששת ימים עשה ה' את השמים ואת הארץ את הים ואת כל אשר בהם וינח ביום השביעי על כן ברך ה' את יום השבת ויקדשהו | (Exodus 20:11, שמות כ:יא)

Because for six days the Almighty created the heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in it and He rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Almighty blessed the Shabbat and made it holy.

Notice the fact that the Torah does not say that the Almighty created the world “*in* six days,” rather “*for* six days,” meaning that the lifespan of the world is only six days and

each Shabbat the Almighty renews another six day lease on creation. Shabbat is the spiritual soul that gives life to the upcoming six days. *Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh - ibid*

On a personal level as well, when we celebrate Shabbat we are latching on to the incredible energy of recreation and can ride the coattails of the Almighty to recreate a better and more blessed life!

THE BLESSINGS

ON A PRACTICAL LEVEL, THE SHABBAT EXPERIENCE AFFORDS US THE OPPORTUNITY TO BRING MULTI-FACETED BLESSINGS TO OUR LIFE. HERE ARE FIVE EXAMPLES OF THE BLESSING THAT IS SHABBAT:

1. **Tranquility** - Between our jobs, our phones and devices, and the constant marketing barrage that society throws at us, we are constantly spinning our wheels. It is as if we need to be “on” at all times. Shabbat closes out the world around us, opens ourselves up to ourselves and allows us to bask in the tranquility that we deserve.
2. **Growth** - A huge part of a Jewish way of life is never to remain stagnant, always to strive to become a better version of ourselves. The issue is that growth requires reflection. Growth requires thought. Growth requires contemplation. If we don't slow down the treadmill of life, it is next to impossible to attempt to grow. We can only meaningfully begin the growth process with a concerted effort to create an oasis of tranquility. Shabbat slows down the pace of our life and opens up the opportunity to grow.

THE BLESSINGS

3. **Humility** - Throughout the week, as we work, create and innovate, our default reaction is to look at our accomplishments and pat ourselves on the back. “Wow! Look at what I have done. Look at my successes.” Shabbat is an opportunity to take a step back and give credit where credit is due. Shabbat is a chance to thank the Almighty for the talents that He gave us and for the opportunities He afforded us. The bi-product of this exercise is a newfound humility and modesty.

4. **Family** - The average American family with working parents spends only about 3% of their week sharing quality time with their family. This is a staggering statistic, particularly because most parents say that the primary purpose of working so many hours is to give their family a good life. When we share a Shabbat experience with our family, our family time increases to 14%! That's a 300% increase each week! Furthermore, as we learned in session 1, the Torah specifically makes sure to include our sons and daughters when laying out the framework for Shabbat, for they are such a big part of the blessings of Shabbat.

THE BLESSINGS

5. **Spirituality** - The Talmud (Beitzah 16a) teaches us that at the commencement of each and every Shabbat we are gifted a neshama yeseira or an added dose of soul that remains with us until Shabbat departs. This added dose of soul opens up our spiritual ability in a much deeper way than during the workweek.

Our ability to connect to the Almighty through prayer, to be personally impacted by Torah study and to turn inwards to our truest self is vastly different on Shabbat than all six days of the week.

A bit of spiritual effort on Shabbat takes us so much further than during the rest of the week.

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF MITZVOT AND CUSTOMS THAT WE PERFORM IN ANTICIPATION OF AND DURING SHABBAT THAT HELP US FOCUS ON THE BLESSING THAT IS SHABBAT. HERE ARE A FEW:

1. Preparing for Shabbat: Our Sages would anticipate the coming of Shabbat for the entire week. If they saw a special food item for sale they would purchase it in honor of Shabbat.
2. In anticipation of Shabbat, we cook special meals, clean our home, bathe and shave, and change into special more elegant Shabbat clothing. All of these preparations help us feel unique and special as Shabbat arrives.
3. Lighting Shabbat candles: Lighting candles in honor of Shabbat adds another layer of peace and light to our home. Additionally, the flame of a candle represents the Jewish soul (See Proverbs 20:27). We welcome our newly acquired Shabbat soul by lighting candles.
4. Kiddush and Havdalah: We usher in the Shabbat and then escort it out with special blessings on a cup of wine.

THE PRACTICAL

5. Walking and talking: We walk and talk in a calmer and more refined manner on Shabbat. As a matter of fact, we refrain from running altogether (if not to perform a mitzvah) in an effort to slow down the pace of life and be better communicators and listeners. We also steer our conversations away from work, finances and the mundane.
6. Prayer and Torah Study: We add additional Shabbat related prayers and even a more comprehensive Torah reading to Shabbat.
7. Shabbat meals: We eat three family focused meals over Shabbat. One on Friday evening and two on Shabbat day. Each Shabbat meal is an opportunity to grow and bond together as a family and discuss all of the important things about life that never make it into the weekday dinner.

PLEASE TAKE SOME TIME TO REFLECT ON
THE BENEFITS OF SHABBAT AND HOW
SHABBAT CAN ENHANCE YOUR LIFE.



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